

*Mayor of Souderton Dan Yocum*  
*Mayor's Memo!*



Picture it; January of 2022. I had been Mayor for a total of 3 days when we all received our increased trash bills in the mail. I had residents calling me to tell me that I was doing a terrible job and that “everyone in Souderton hates you”. *What a warm welcome to my new volunteer job!* But I made a promise to Souderton that day; you may not always agree with the decisions that are made, but as your Mayor, I will ensure that you are armed with as much information as possible. As such, this Mayors Memo will focus on an uncomfortable topic; Taxes.

All budget meetings are open to the public. Though few residents choose to attend, those that do witness many long hours of deliberation over every line item of our budget. The months-long process is sometimes grueling, but Souderton Borough Council takes a deep-dive to ensure that every expense is necessary and that we are pinching pennies and cutting fat wherever possible. We do not take this topic lightly.

Souderton Borough is at a turning point in many ways. First and foremost, our Borough Manager of 40 years, Mike Coll, is retiring in 2024. Mr. Coll knows more about this community than anyone could ever hope to learn. To capture his decades of knowledge, we will need to hire an Assistant Borough Manager to shadow Mr. Coll for several months and absorb as much information as possible. When Mike retires, that individual will become the Borough Manager. But in the interim, we will have two salaries to cover.

Salaries in the Police Department will also be increasing. Every few years, Souderton Police enter into Collective Bargaining with the Borough. At the time of writing this Mayors Memo, we are in final stages of negotiations. We work diligently to find a healthy middle ground that keeps Police Department costs reasonable, yet still pays our officers a competitive wage. While the specifics of the negotiation are not finalized quite yet, it will certainly result in an increased expense. The police department is the Boroughs largest budget item.

Additionally, Souderton Borough has had some incredible longevity in our tools and equipment. We don't need things that are shiny and new, but much of our equipment is nearing (or well-beyond!) the end of its manufacturer-recommended lifespan. Our street sweeper is from 1995. Our Sewer Treatment Facility truck is over 30 years old. Our six-wheel dump truck was purchased used and is a 1998 model. Credit goes to our Public Works crew whose immaculate maintenance squeezes every ounce of usable life out of the equipment. But eventually, the equipment use will run out. This year we have budgeted for the purchase of a used dump truck and a new commercial lawn mower.

Lastly, Souderton Borough Hall is in desperate need of repairs. The building was converted from the old Summit Street Elementary School in the 1980s and has not been updated since. This has been an ongoing topic of conversation for years. The basement floods and causes air-quality issues in the building, the windows leak, the bathrooms are not up to code, the façade is crumbling, and the entire building is not suitable for modern office use. We have explored all options, including moving buildings all-together or doing a complete renovation that would have cost upwards of \$4 Million. Souderton Borough Council decided against those options, and instead chose to mitigate the problems as much as possible, while still keeping spending under control. The Police Department will be renovated using federal funds received from the American Rescue Plan Act, and the Administrative side of the building will be renovated for a fraction of the original cost. More details to come as plans are finalized, but the Borough has no choice but to address some of these issues in 2023.

None of this is surprising or particularly “bad”. Past Borough Council’s have been laying the groundwork for these plans for many years, and our auditors continue to give Souderton high marks for our fiscal responsibility. Unfortunately, as costs continue to rise and times continue to change, Souderton Borough must react accordingly. To ensure the success of this community continues for generations to come, we have to think about what is financially responsible. All that said, your municipal taxes will increase from 6.8 mills to 7.25 mills in 2023.

*Wait, wait...before you get your torches and pitch forks!* Here is some information to consider. Take a close look at your tax bill. Your municipality is tasked with administering all taxes, but that does not mean that they are all coming back to Souderton Borough. In 2022, the average Souderton Borough property owner paid \$5,396 in total property taxes. Of that, \$3,986, or about 74%, goes to the School District. \$520, or about 9.6%, goes to Montgomery County, with another \$54 or 1% going toward Montgomery County Community College. That means that the remaining \$755, or about 14%, goes to Souderton Borough. Arguably, your municipality provides the most diverse services directly to you. That \$755, which equates to about \$63 a month, pays for your police force, road maintenance, parking lots, snow plowing, brush collection, bridges, street signage, storm sewer, the sewer treatment plant, street lights, parks, code enforcement, economic development, Souderton Pool, engineering costs, and the staff that keeps it all running smoothly. There are also two Special Service taxes for the Indian Valley Public Library and the Perseverance Volunteer Fire Company, which each add an additional approximately \$40 to your annual tax bill. Those two Special Service taxes were altered in this upcoming budget to make them even, so you’ll give a little bit less to the Library and a little bit more to the Fire Company. All that said, in 2023 the average tax that a property owner will pay to Souderton Borough will be \$868; an average increase of about \$113 for the year. This tax bill equates to a total of about \$72 a month for the standard household.

We are conscious that these are tough and uncertain times. Your Borough representatives go to great lengths to make sure Souderton Borough stays a wonderful and affordable community. I appreciate you taking the time to read this Memo and learn more about the process, the scope, and our reasoning.

*I wish all our residents a healthy and happy 2023!*